

# I. INTRODUCTION

## SUMMARY

This Milpitas Midtown Specific Plan provides a new vision for an approximately 1,000-acre area of land which is currently undergoing changes related to its growing role as a housing and employment center in Silicon Valley. Development activity over the past several years has included approval and/or construction of 1,200 units of housing, reinvestment in the Great Mall, extension of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA's) Tasman East Light Rail Transit (LRT) line, and proposals to extend Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) through the area as part of the San Jose extension. Rather than responding to development proposals on a site by site basis, the City of Milpitas (the City) undertook a specific plan process in order to look comprehensively at the planning area and provide a cohesive vision for the future. The purpose of the Specific Plan is to:

- Guide the development and further evolution of the Milpitas Midtown Planning Area (Midtown Area);
- Encourage development that responds to City and regional objectives, such as a compatible mixture of residential, retail, and commercial uses;
- Reflect neighborhood considerations; and
- Encourage private investment in the area.

The overall strategy in the Midtown Area is to create a mixed-use community that includes high-density, transit-oriented housing and a central

community “gathering place,” while maintaining needed industrial, service, and commercial uses.

The plan is long-range in nature, intended to guide development for the next 20 years. Some land in the Midtown Area is undeveloped and readily developable over the short-term, while other parcels may be redeveloped over a longer time frame.

Overall, the Specific Plan provides for up to 4,860 new dwelling units and supporting retail development; new office developments at key locations; bicycle and pedestrian trails linking the areas together and new parks to serve residential development.

The ideas and concepts of the Milpitas Midtown Specific Plan are in conformance with the Transit Village Development Planning Act of 1994.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Midtown Area represents an exciting opportunity to reinvigorate the “historic” commercial and industrial core of Milpitas and bring it into the life of the city. Midtown is at a watershed point in its development; the area is located strategically within the larger Silicon Valley region, an area that has experienced tremendous growth and prosperity in the past several decades. Midtown is highly accessible; it is set between Interstate (I)-880, I-680, and Calaveras Boulevard (state route 237) and the Montague Expressway; it is traversed by two Union Pacific Railroad lines; it includes two major east-west arte-

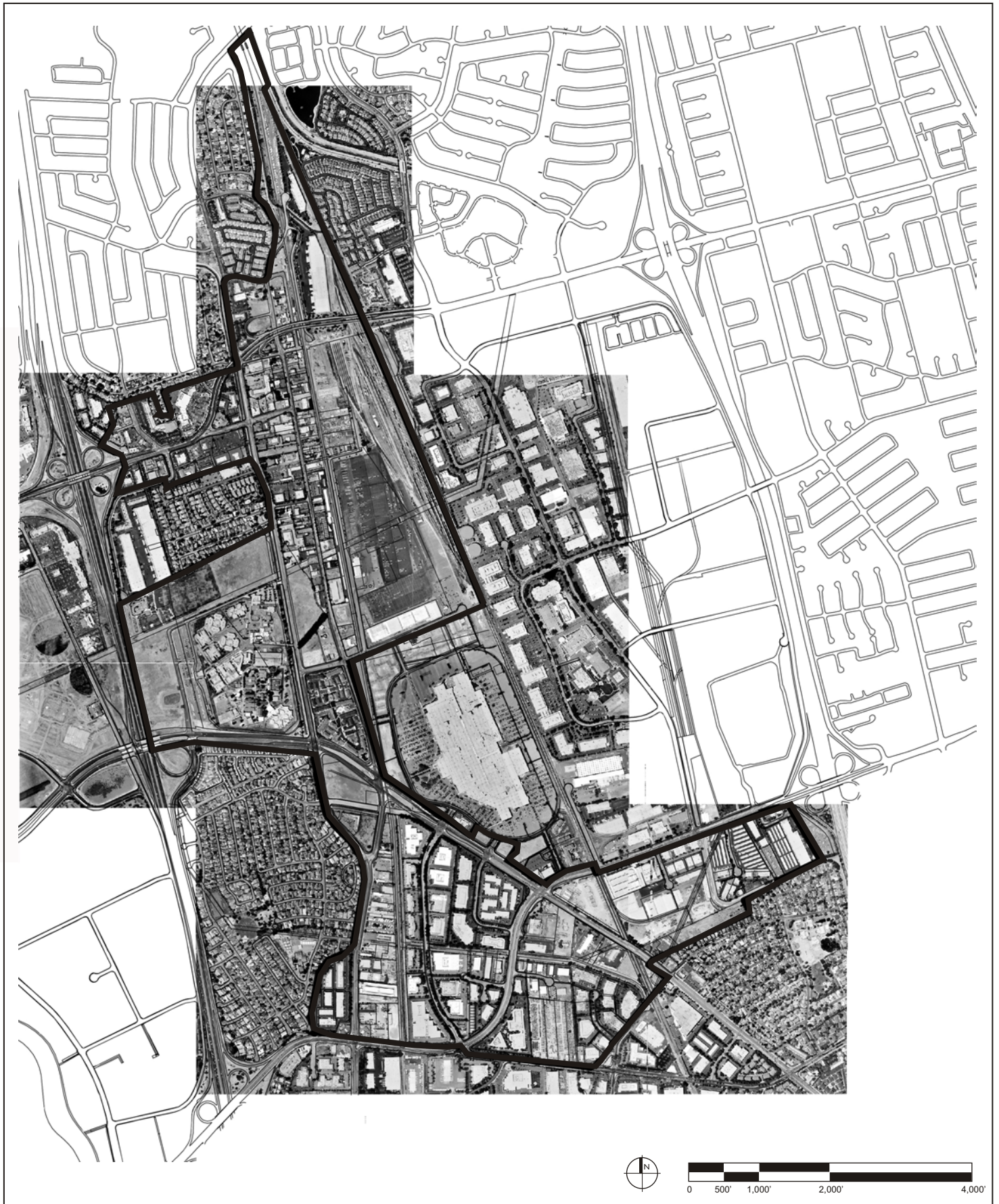


Figure I.I: Aerial View of Midtown Milpitas

rials; and it will be served by the Tasman East LRT line, as well as a future BART extension to San Jose. Recent development activity in Midtown, including over 1,200 new housing units and reinvestment in the Great Mall to expand entertainment activities, begin to suggest new directions for the Midtown Area.

In late 1999, the City initiated a planning process for the Midtown Area, encompassing 942 acres of land in the center of the city. The area includes many of the original elements of the city, including the historic crossroads of Milpitas at Serra Way and Main Street (formerly Milpitas–Alviso Road and Oakland–San Jose Road), two freight rail lines, and the former Ford Motor Company factory, which is now the site of the Great Mall. For many years, members of the community have voiced a desire for a more traditional “heart” or community gathering place in Milpitas. At the same time, the proposed extension of the Tasman East LRT line will traverse the area, linking Milpitas with San Jose and other significant destinations in the South Bay. With the resolution of the urban growth boundary and the city’s outward expansion, it is an appropriate time to focus on the future of the Midtown Area.

Cities within Silicon Valley as a whole are faced with difficult choices for their future. While the region has experienced a period of incredible economic prosperity, it also experiences severe traffic congestion as tens of thousands of commuters drive to and from jobs every day. This congestion is created by the imbalance between jobs and housing in the region, and is expected to worsen in the future.

Nevertheless, there are some important opportunities. The VTA has developed some 28.4 miles of light rail with 45 stations throughout Santa Clara County, connecting job centers, neighborhoods and downtown San Jose. Providing new housing, particularly around the transit stations would begin to address the imbalance between jobs and housing and the resulting traffic congestion.

## PLANNING PROCESS

During the 3-year planning process for the Midtown Area several community workshops were held as well as Planning Commission and City Council meetings. The City Council appointed a Midtown Advisory Committee comprised of two City Council members and two Planning Commissioners to guide the preparation of the Midtown Specific Plan. The Committee provided direction on all aspects of the plan as well as on the overall planning process.

During the months of January, February, and March 2000, ten community outreach meetings were held to solicit suggestions, comments and desires from the public and from community leaders of Milpitas. Five meetings were held in the Midtown Area to encourage input from Milpitas residents, property owners, and other interested parties. Meetings were also held with community leaders whose investments in the area include businesses, residential development, undeveloped property, and civic leadership. In total, over 100 individuals participated in over 25 hours of meetings.

The community outreach revealed a great deal of consensus regarding the issues and desires for the Midtown Area. On the basis of these meetings, a vision statement and a set of goals were adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council which provide the basis for the Midtown Specific Plan.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

The Milpitas Midtown Specific Plan presents a framework for growth, development and reinvestment in the city's industrial and commercial core for the next 20 years. A transition of the area into an attractive and economically vital district that accommodates a mixture of housing, shopping, employment, entertainment, and cultural and recreational activities organized within a system of landscaped boulevards, streets and pedestrian/bicycle linkages is envisioned.

A pedestrian-oriented and easily accessible mixed-use district is planned along Main Street—this area is intended to serve as a gathering place for the community as a whole. The area will be served by a viable multi-modal transportation network, including light and heavy rail transit, bus, bicycle, pedestrian and automobile systems. New land uses and activities are being planned to support all of these modes of transportation. Higher density housing is a key land use in the Midtown Area; new housing will support retail businesses, provide an “around-the-clock environment” and support transit investments being made in the area. Due to its central location and high level of transit accessibility, the Midtown

Area supports a greater intensity of residential and commercial development, particularly surrounding the transit stations and along Main Street.

## **GOALS**

### **Land Use**

1. Encourage a compatible mixture of residential, retail, office, service-oriented commercial and industrial uses within the Midtown Area.
2. Provide for a significant component of new housing within the area in order to: improve the vitality of the Midtown Area, address local and regional housing needs, and reinforce the use of transit.
3. Promote an intensity of development in Midtown that is appropriate to its central location.
4. Provide for a land use mix that supports major transit facilities.

### **Community Design**

1. Create an attractive district that is uniquely “Milpitas.”
2. Establish a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district that is focused along Main Street.
3. Provide urban open spaces (i.e., plazas, squares) that serve multiple purposes and can be used for special events.
4. Improve the character of streets within the Midtown Area.

### **Circulation**

1. Improve the viability of the pedestrian, bicycle and transit systems.
2. Balance the need for traffic with livability and a pedestrian focus.

## Implementation

1. Identify “catalyst” development sites.
2. Identify financial resources to create a plan that is economically self-sufficient.
3. Establish the regulatory mechanisms necessary to implement the Specific Plan.

## PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THE SPECIFIC PLAN

The Milpitas Midtown Specific Plan has been developed to address several issues and concerns that have arisen with respect to the Midtown Area.

This Specific Plan is intended to establish the nature, character and location of activities and development; to guide the orderly growth of Midtown; to more specifically define the nature of development and the physical framework of the area; and to provide a basis for future implementing actions, which will involve public and private investment to improve and beautify the area. The plan provides policies and guidelines as well as identifies improvements to streetscapes, infrastructure, and public open spaces.

The Specific Plan process provides the opportunity to plan for the Midtown Area more comprehensively as well as on the basis of more specific information than is possible in a general plan. While the Specific Plan provides more detailed direction for the area, it is ultimately a policy document that will shape future growth and investment in the area.



*Midtown Planning Workshop*

The authority for specific plans is set forth under California law (Section 65451 et. seq.) to provide a greater level of specificity in planning a site of special interest or value to a community. As required under law, a specific plan must contain:

- (a) ... a text and diagram or diagrams which specify all of the following in detail:
  - (1) *The distribution, location and extent of uses of the land, including open space within the area covered by the plan.*
  - (2) *The proposed distribution, location and extent and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewerage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described in the plan.*
  - (3) *Standards and criteria by which development will proceed and standards for the conservation, development and utilization of land resources, where applicable.*



- (4) *A program of implementation measures including regulations, programs, public works projects and financing measures necessary to carry out paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 above.*
- (b) ...a statement of the relationship of the specific plan with the general plan.

The Milpitas Midtown Specific Plan has been organized into the following elements: Land Use, Circulation, Community Design, Utilities and Public Services, and Implementation. Each element includes background information and goals and policies for the area. Section 8.0, which follows the plan elements, provides specific requirements addressing the form and character of new development consistent with goals and policies contained in Section 5.0—Community Design. Appendix A includes a discussion of the relationship of this Specific Plan to the General Plan.

*Midtown Planning Workshop*



## RELATIONSHIP TO THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

A programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR), pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has been prepared to provide an analysis of the potential impacts of this Specific Plan and to recommend appropriate mitigation measures as policies and features of the plan. The Specific Plan and the EIR were prepared in close coordination with one another; mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Specific Plan where possible.

The Specific Plan EIR assesses the implications of an assumed program of residential, commercial, and parks and open space uses. When specific development proposals are submitted to the City for development in the Midtown Area, the City will determine whether or not the environmental effects of proposed projects were addressed in the EIR. If the City finds that proposed projects would not result in any additional environmental impacts beyond those considered in the EIR, no new environmental analysis would be required.

## BACKGROUND REPORTS

This Specific Plan is based on data collected in a series of background reports and technical memoranda, including:

- *Milpitas Midtown Specific Plan Community Outreach Report*, Sausedo Company, March 2000. This report provides a summary of the comments received during the community outreach meetings held in January, February and March 2000.
- *Existing Conditions Report*, EDAW and Associated Consultants, April 2000. This report provides detailed background information on the Midtown Area, including land use; market opportunities; community design considerations; circulation and infrastructure conditions, and cultural resource considerations.
- *Conceptual Plan Alternatives*, EDAW and Associated Consultants, July 2000. This report describes and evaluates three alternatives for the Midtown Area.

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